



What is a Gifted Resource Teacher (RT)?

An interview with Jennifer Mulhern, Stevens Elementary's RT

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We interviewed Jennifer Mulhern, the Gifted and Talented Resource Teacher (RT) for Stevens Elementary in north east Wheat Ridge to learn a little more about her role in the JEFFCO GT web of life.

Jennifer has a dynamic personality. Her smile is kind and she connects easily with children. That's a good thing because as an RT, Stevens is only one of the 9 schools (7 elementary and 2 academies) and 900 students with Advanced Learning Plans (ALP). Like all other RTs, Jennifer's office is located within her GT Center School. She provides supports and resources to GT students, teachers of gifted students and to the GT community at large.

When I ask Jennifer to describe the work she does for students, she tells me that much of her daily activities consist of "identifying students as gifted learners". She goes on to say that the work "is valuable to students because once a child is put on an Advanced Learning Plan (ALP), it is a legal document that has to be attended to". The Colorado Department of Education describes an ALP as a legal document outlining programming identified for gifted students. The ALP consists of goals which are constructed by the teacher, the student, the parents and focuses on areas of identified strength for the student.

When she's working with the teachers of gifted students in her schools, her work looks like listening and working to be a thought partner. This means she's working "with teachers to come up with learning strategies to meet the needs of their students." She helps teachers understand the different needs of the gifted learner and she works to dispel misconceptions of what GT learners look, act and behave like. Jennifer tells me that "We help teachers understand not only the academic side of gifted learners, but also the social/emotional side as well. We also expose teachers to current teaching methodologies for gifted learners and support incorporating them into their teaching."

Supporting teachers who work with gifted kids is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes building a culture of giftedness. This is the work that Jennifer and the other RTs do in the community, they communicate and support what it means to be a gifted learner. Jennifer tells me, "the gifted department offers seminars on various topics concerning gifted learners throughout the year. Resource teachers also talk with parents when they have questions about the process of getting an ALP or when they need help navigating support for their child."

Having a strong, knowledgeable and approachable RT can forever change a child's life. I know. Jennifer is my child's RT and we're a family at Stevens Elementary school in north east Wheat Ridge. Because of Jennifer's endeavors my child's brain is fed, her teacher has an advocate in attending to her social emotional needs and school is an exciting and stimulating experience. And I'm never-endingly grateful.